

# Parks and Recreation

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## Mission

To manage and interpret Indiana's unique natural, wildlife, and cultural resources, provide for compatible recreational opportunities, and sustain the integrity of these resources for future generations.

## Summary of Activities

The **Department of Natural Resources (DNR)** manages Indiana's system of 32 state parks and reservoirs. The 23 state parks comprise 62,322 acres across Indiana. The nine reservoirs include eight properties built by the Army Corp of Engineers for flood control, covering 114,721 acres. The DNR is responsible for protecting Indiana's natural resources, providing recreational opportunities, maintaining the state's natural capital assets and infrastructure, and educating visitors and the general public about the environment and the importance of environmental protection. The experiences offered at Indiana state parks and reservoirs are diverse. Seven parks have inns where visitors can stay in indoor accommodations, while others offer camping, fishing, hiking, boating, and access to a variety of natural environments. The DNR also manages a Statewide Trails program and a Natural and Scenic Rivers program to promote outdoor recreation.

## External Factors

Indiana's success in providing high-quality state parks and recreational opportunities has increased the demand for these services. Public demand for more comfortable and modern recreational services (full hookup camp sites, cable television in DNR inns, etc.) continues to increase. The DNR is also operating under increased requirements for sewage testing, treatment and disposal, trash removal and disposal, and employee testing. Security and health concerns have also increased due to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and the advent of the West Nile virus. Providing and maintaining these increased service levels are a challenge during these extraordinarily difficult fiscal times.

## Evaluation and Accomplishments

During the early 1990's State Parks and Reservoirs responded to requests to streamline services without impacting visitors to our properties. By the late 1990's this was no longer possible. Many policies changed due to the economic impact of the past few years. Lifeguards were eliminated at many beaches and pools, a "carry in, carry out" trash policy was initiated, mowing and ground maintenance was reduced, swimming hours and the swimming season were reduced by 40%, one in four seasonal staff members were eliminated, and cultural arts programs and special events were reduced or eliminated. Full time staffing has been reduced by approximately 2 staff positions per property over the last 15 years. Park visitation has grown from 33,600 in 1919 to nearly 20 million visitor days per year. Visitation at reservoir properties has increased by approximately 33% since 1980, with more than 60,000 hunting opportunities taking place each year.

The DNR has improved services to customers by upgrading campgrounds, comfort stations, nature centers, and inns. Modernized restrooms and full hookup campsites including 50-amp electrical service lead to increased costs to maintain and operate facilities. Utility costs have increased 26.5% since fiscal year 2000.

The Division of State Parks and Reservoirs successfully implemented a new automated Campground Reservation system in 2003 providing a greatly improved service for our camping customers. This service permits visitors to Indiana Parks, Reservoirs and Forests to make real-time reservations for campsites, cabins, shelters or recreation buildings via a call center or the Internet. The old manual system only allowed 50% of the sites to be reserved at one time. The new automated system allows nearly 100% reservation, optimizing visitation throughout the



system. It also increases fiscal accountability and simplifies revenue handling and the check-in process at DNR campgrounds. Increased recreation fees provided the revenue necessary to pay for this new customer service.

Redbird, the first state sponsored off-road vehicle riding area, opened in June of this year. Two new nature centers also opened during the past biennium at Mounds State Park and Salamonie Reservoir.

DNR also continues to improve natural resource stewardship activities by aggressively seeking out and controlling invasive exotic species from expanding on state properties such as; the gypsy moth, Japanese long horned beetle, and the emerald ash borer. In addition, the DNR continues to offer increased opportunities for children and visitors to participate in interactive programs on state properties, which teach environmental ethics while providing entertainment and fun.



Raccoon Lake  
State Recreation Area

## Plans for the Biennium

The DNR expects to acquire additional land at Charlestown State Park. At Prophetstown State Park, the DNR will continue to acquire new land for park completion, finish basic infrastructure design and construction, build basic public use facilities such as picnic areas, bike trail, campgrounds, and begin general operations. Efforts will continue to build and reclaim wetland areas. The DNR will improve customer service at state park inns, campgrounds, and other facilities through repaired and reconstructed facilities. The Outdoor Recreation division will respond to the increased demand for services, especially through the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund program, greenway initiatives, and expansion of both on-road and off-road bicycling opportunities. The Division of Fish and Wildlife plans to implement a new statewide automated fishing and hunting license system during the summer of 2004.

